travelbite.co.uk

Feature

Free brochures on luxury travel

Sinking a beer in Salt Lake City

Wednesday, 14 Oct 2009 00:00

It's home to the ultra conservative Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but Utah is far from dull. Travelbite.co.uk's *Chris O'Toole* heads to the state capital Salt Lake City to explode some pre-conceptions.

First a confession. Catharsis if you will. When offered the chance to travel to Utah my initial reaction was one of scepticism. Utah? What is there to see in Utah? Surely the Beehive State is largely barren, controlled by Mormons and overshadowed by a lingering threat of sobriety?

Wrong, wrong and wrong again.

The cultural influence of the Mormons has been eroded over decades to leave a progressive, forward looking interpretation of America. There is also a fantastic landscape for visitors to enjoy, with a wealth of National Parks that have provided a backdrop to countless classic spaghetti westerns.

Moreover, the common misconception that Utah is a 'dry' state is also hopelessly outdated, with a number of thriving microbreweries offering their product alongside established international brands.

Walked into a bar to drink a beer...

One of the most prevalent misunderstandings when it comes to Utah is that the state is somehow still trapped in the clutches of prohibition - lingering in a sober limbo. This is simply not the case, with beverages of all hues on offer.

The state does impose a strictly enforced limit on the alcoholic content of draft beer, placing the limit at 3.2 per cent alcohol by volume (ABV). However, potency in the state of Utah is measured by weight (ABW), pushing the government limit up to around four per cent on draft beer.

This is stronger than many popular British ales – including Greene King IPA and Young's Bitter - and allows local brewers tremendous scope for innovation when creating new and exciting beverages.

Moreover, the alcoholic content of beer sold by the bottle is not restricted by either weight or volume; allowing for the sale of all manner of deliciously intoxicating beverages. So holidaymakers can enjoy a full range of local beverages if they so desire – as well as American classics such as Coors, Budweiser and Miller.

Microbreweries of Utah

But – putting those tepid beverages to the side for a moment – Utah is, perhaps surprisingly, home to a thriving microbrewery community. Far form its image as a bastion of sobriety, Utahans enjoy a beer with friends as much as any other community.

Indeed state capital Salt Lake City alone is home to six microbreweries. Perhaps the most famous is Squatters - which is split between a functioning brewery and the next door restaurant.

I visited the downtown location on a Friday night to find it packed to the rafters. It is difficult to imagine a more traditional American scene; with locals rabidly cheering the local baseball team – Salt Lake Bees – on big screens, chugging back bottle beers and eating hamburgers.

Taking a table I ordered a Chasing Tail to begin proceedings. After so much bland UK lager the difference is immediate and obvious. Utahans are connoisseurs when it comes to beer and this dark, woody ale is a real treat. The Organic Amber Ale was another favourite, while the newest offering, the Devastator (clocking in at eight per cent ABV) seems like a particularly enjoyable way to end the evening.

But what about those burgers? Everything in America is bigger than its European equivalent and the food is no different. Ordering a 'gourmet' buffalo burger I received a meal the size of a frisbee – cooked rare – which would have provided subsistence to a family of five. Luckily it was delightful allowing me to finish the whole thing.

Baseball on the other hand remains a (lengthy), tedious, mystery.

Also in Salt Lake City Red Rock Brewing is another popular brewpub – recently awarded the Large Brewpub and Large Brewpub Brewer of the Year titled at the Great American Beer Festival.

When we visited in early October the venue was celebrating Oktoberfest, offering a range of European beers, including Rauch Beer and Munich Dunkel.

Although we ran out of time during our visit Wasatch Brew Pub offers locals a relaxing atmosphere at the top of Main Street in downtown Salt Lake City.

Latter Day Saints

Many of the misconceptions of the state of Utah spring from the role of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Believers of this offshoot of the Christian church honour of the teachings of the Book of Mormon (hence the abbreviated Mormons) and eschew all alcohol, as well as tea, coffee and a host of other concoctions viewed as 'essential' to many in Europe.
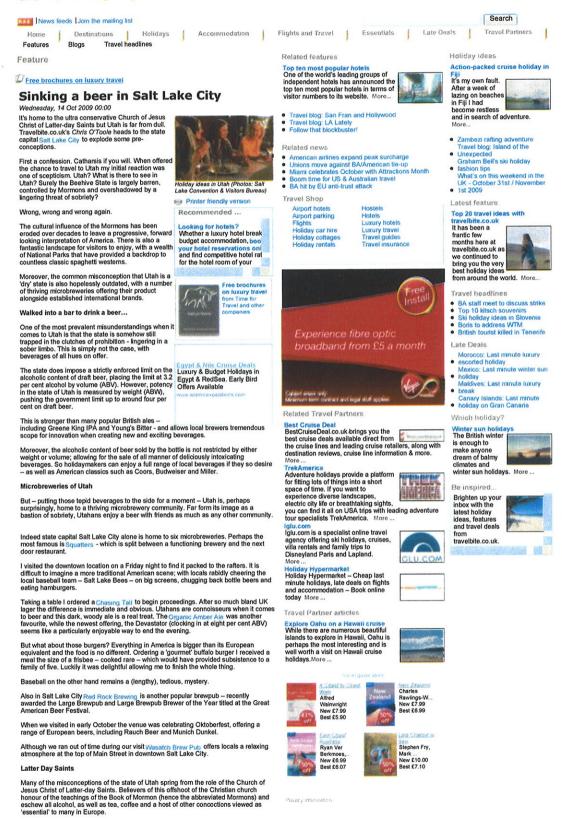
But the Mormons are a minority in the state of Utah. Indeed more can be found in the state of Florida, but the misconception lingers. However, their lifestyle choices are open fodder for many of the state's nonbelievers; with many pointing to a willingness to drink (caffeine-laced) Coca Cola while shunning coffee, for example.

Holiday ideas in Utah (Photos: Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau)

Printer friendly version

Recommended ...

Looking for hotels? Whether a luxury hotel break budget accommodation, boo your hotel reservations oni and find competitive hotel rat for the hotel room of your

Free brochures on luxury travel from Time for Travel and other companies

Egypt & Nile Cruise Deals Luxury & Budget Holidays in Egypt & RedSea. Early Bird Offers Available
www.islamicexpeditions.com